

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Northwest Lowlands Ecological Landscape



Overview

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recognizes that sound planning is a partnership effort with the people it serves and that the end product must be broadly supported by them as well as fit the capabilities of the property. The DNR encourages citizen input throughout the planning process. This public participation plan outlines the strategy for soliciting public review and input into the development of the regional plan for the Northwest Sands ecological landscape.

The regional plan will apply to DNR managed lands only and will be based on and influenced by existing statutes, administrative codes, scientific data, the best capabilities of the resources, judgment of resource management professionals and public preferences. The local and regional recreational supply, economy and social conditions will also be considered. The approved regional plan will represent the best roles for the properties in their local, regional and statewide context.

The Region

The department has embarked upon a multi-phase, regional planning approach based on defined regions (Ecological Landscapes) that we believe will get us to our objective of completed regional plans for department-managed lands by 2025. Ecological Landscapes are 16 areas of Wisconsin with different ecological attributes and management opportunities. They can be used to identify the best areas of the state to manage for different natural communities, key habitats, aquatic features and native plants and animals from an ecosystem management perspective.

The Northwest Sands Regional Plan covers all DNR managed lands in the Northwest Sands Ecological Landscape. See map for the general area. Visit our regional planning website for a complete list of all properties included in this regional plan (DNR website, keyword: regional planning).



Northwest Sands Region

Planning Process

The regional planning process is divided into three primary phases:

Phase 1

Phase one is preparatory work. Reliable, current information on the property's resources and public uses, as well the regional demands and opportunities is needed as a foundation for the planning process. Prior to the announcement that planning is starting, the department updates natural resource and recreational use data for the property and collects regional data in order to better understand the property's current and potential functional role in the region.

Phase 2

Phase two is plan development and public involvement. It begins with a formal public announcement that the property's regional plan will be updated. The announcement is soon followed by a public open house to share information on the process, and

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Northwest Lowlands

gather public feedback on important issues to be addressed in the plan.

Phase 3

Phase three involves the presentation of the draft regional plan to the Natural Resources Board for approval.

Opportunities for Participation in Planning

The department's goals for public involvement in regional planning are to offer the public meaningful ways to be involved in shaping the future management and use of their favorite properties, and to provide a means for interested people to stay informed about the property and planning progress. Public review and comment will be formally sought at key milestone points during the plan's development and approval process. However, public comments are welcome at any time. The formal public input points in the process are:

- at the beginning of the plan development process (Phase 2) to help identify important issues to be considered in the plan;
- to review and comment on the draft regional plan; and
- lastly, the Natural Resources Board offers the public an opportunity to provide input to them when they consider approval of the proposed regional plan.

Ways To Make Your Voice Heard

Public meetings: DNR staff will hold informal public meetings at key points of the regional planning process to present and discuss information on the property and plan proposals, and to listen to public comments and suggestions.

Public Input Forms: The department will issue a public input form to survey the public on various regional planning issues. The form will be available online at the Northwest Sands Website and as a hard copy at the public meetings.

Other ways to comment: Comments may be submitted to the planning team at any time during the planning process by email, postal service or by phone. Contact information is provided at the end of this document and online.

How the Department will Provide Planning Information to You

Issue Press Releases

Press releases will be issued at key stages of the project to announce public meetings, provide information updates and to solicit public comments.

Direct Mailings (email and postal)

The department uses GovDelivery, an electronic notification list, to keep interested parties (landowners, user groups, sporting clubs, environmental groups, service groups, local government, state officials, affected Indian Tribes, local and state newspapers) informed about upcoming events and discussions. The email system is used at key points in the planning process to provide information about the property and planning issues; and to announce meetings, decisions, and other planning developments.

To sign-up for GovDelivery notifications, go to the DNR webpage, type in the key word "regional planning" and look for the Northwest Sands Region under "in progress". Click on "Subscribe to Updates." Or, contact the department at the address or phone number listed at the end of this document.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Northwest Lowlands Regional Plan

Regional Plan Web Page

The department will set up a special regional planning web page where information about the property, the planning process, draft plan documents, notices, planning progress reports and other important planning information may be accessed. Go to the DNR website, and search for key word “master planning”.

Planning Reports

After each formal public input step the department will summarize the input received. Additional progress reports will be posted, if needed, on the regional planning website.

Consultation with Other Governmental Units

Throughout the planning process, the regional planning team will consult with local governments, state and federal agencies, and affected Indian Tribes on a government-to-government basis regarding mutual planning issues.

How Plan Decisions will be Made

In developing an effective property master plan the department listens to many voices. Recreation users, commercial interests, neighboring landowners, conservation groups, elected officials, other government agencies, tribal representatives, and other interested persons or groups are all encouraged to participate. Input received at each major step in the planning process will be considered as the plan is developed.

Decisions on which ideas to incorporate into the plan will be made based on the type of property, its capabilities, the best role of the property in its local, regional and statewide context, and on the professional expertise of DNR staff. Further, the plan must comply with applicable Federal Laws, State Statutes, Administrative and Department Codes, and facility design standards. While a broad range of interests will be listened to and considered in developing a proposed master plan, the final decision-making responsibility and authority on the master plan rests with the DNR’s citizen policy-making Natural Resources Board.

Contacts:

To provide comments or suggestions on the planning process, to receive materials, or to sign up for the mailing list, contact:

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